MAHOMMED

"THE GREAT ARABIAN"

MEREDITH TOWNSEND

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"The Great Arabian"

ASIA AND EUROPE

By MEREDITH TOWNSEND

Demy 8vo. 5/- net

"A volume which will long hold its place among the few fundamental books dealing with the modern relations of East and West."—*Daily News.*

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BY

MEREDITH TOWNSEND

AUTHOR OF "ASIA AND EUROPE"

BOSTON & NEW YORK
HOUGHTON MIFFLIN COMPANY
1912

FOREWORD

MEREDITH WHITE TOWNSEND was born in London on April 1st, 1831. The Townsends were small landowners in Essex, of the type known in East Anglia as gentleman-farmers; many of them are buried in Coggeshall Church. On his mother's side he derived from the Sparrows, who since the time of James I had lived in a house in the Ipswich Butter Market, now shown to the public as The Ancient House. From her he derived the name Meredith and Welsh blood. His father, William Townsend, of Bures, Suffolk, died when he was a little boy, and his mother (who became a Swedenborgian and survived to 1870) returned with him and his two sisters to live in Ipswich. He entered the grammar school there in 1841, and shot up rapidly to the top; among his school friends being the learned Cowell, Edward Fitzgerald's friend; but the strain of genteel living upon a nominal income told upon him, and

gave him a not very agreeable recollection of this portion of his life.

When he was seventeen John Clark Marshman, editor of *The Friend of India*, founder (jointly with his father, the famous Baptist Missionary and Orientalist, Joshua Marshman) of the Serampore College, and author of a well-known *History of India* (1842), asked him to come out to Calcutta to work on the paper. This had been started in 1835 and was produced at Serampore, about twelve miles above Calcutta, on the Hoogly. At Serampore Townsend lived with the Marshmans, and sent the whole of his first year's salary home to his mother.

He learned several native languages from an old Brahman pundit, who frequently harangued him on the irremovable barriers of East and West. At twenty-one he became editor of the now rapidly growing journal *The Friend of India.* He often wrote practically the whole of the paper himself. He continued a friend and ally of the missionary and evangelical circle at Serampore, to which he owed his first introduction to Indian life, but in

religious matters he came to stand a good way apart from them, rarely attending church and becoming more and more of a convert to ill-defined Unitarian or, as he would have preferred to call them, Arian opinions. During the Mutiny he made of *The Friend of India* a power in the land, and he was more than once thanked by Dalhousie and Canning for the kind of influence which he exerted. Dalhousie's thanks were well earned by the noble vindication of his methods undertaken by Townsend not only in his own paper, but also in the London *Times*, of which he was correspondent. His predecessor on *The Friend of India* had drawn up *A Guide to the Civil Law*, which was the accepted authority on the subject before Macaulay's Civil Code came into existence. Townsend now at the end of 1856 began the issue of *The Annals of Administration*, which was published quarterly at Serampore, and was intended to do for India what Leone Levi did by combining the data obtained from the Blue Books of England. The work was afterwards continued by his colleague on *The Friend of India*, Dr. George

Smith, father of Principal George Adam Smith, of Aberdeen.

While Meredith Townsend was at Serampore, Edwin Arnold was at Deccan College, and the two men both returned to Europe in 1860, one to lead the "lions" of *The Daily Telegraph*, the other to build up the fortunes of *The Spectator*. Having regard to the influence which these two organs were to exercise upon the future of English journalism, the coincidence is a rather remarkable one. Since Rintoul's day the circulation of *The Spectator* had dwindled to a very few thousand, so that with the profits of his Indian journalism Townsend had no difficulty in purchasing it. His leading contributor, R. H. Hutton, soon joined him in the venture, which was not at first profitable. The turning-point was the recognition by readers that the paper had been a true and safe guide in the matter of the American Civil War, when the majority of Englishmen had gone astray in their judgments and sympathies. From the outbreak of the war *The Spectator* had vehemently urged the justice of the Northern cause, and prophesied the cer-

tainty of its ultimate victory. For a time the commercial effects had been disastrous, and subscribers and advertisers fell away. Yet Townsend and Hutton held on their way, impervious to anything but the conviction that the North was triumphant both in principle and in fact. The episode was remembered long to the credit of English journalism. When the change of feeling came, it came handsomely. Townsend and Hutton's authority was established. In the affairs of the Indian frontier their predictions were recognised as equally fortunate. The basis of *The Spectator's* authorship was rapidly widened, among early contributors being C. H. Pearson and Mr. Asquith, while later recruits included Walter Bagehot and Mrs. Oliphant.

Townsend, above all, thoroughly understood how to interest his readers. He interested them because public affairs were his hobby and his passion. He was supremely interested in the changing scene upon which the publicist has to keep his gaze fixed. The result was that one read his articles with a sensation identical with that of listening to an able and well-

read person talking at his best. His apt, pithy sayings, his historical illustrations, his flashes of political wisdom fell crisply, evenly, and unconventionally. He wrote in *The Spectator* chiefly on foreign topics, and his general knowledge of history was quite equal to the task. His reading was enormous and miscellaneous in the extreme. He hated qualification, and was a generous adapter of Jowett's maxim: "Never qualify, never retract and let them howl." He never wrote about religion in *The Spectator*, and this was, perhaps, just as well, for he had very little sympathy with the growing churchmanship and eucharistic ecstasies of Hutton. Hutton, he more than once said, was "as blind as a bat, but had the courage of forty bloodhounds." For once, easy writing made easy reading, for Townsend seldom exceeded two hours in finishing an article. His work fell readily and almost inalterably into article shape, two articles made a chapter, and so many chapters a book. Yet he never permitted such ready-made literature to materialise into books. Virtually the only book he com-

pleted was that of which this study is an excerpt.

After his compilations in India Townsend accomplished comparatively little outside journalism. With John Langton Sanford (1824–1877) he produced a valuable series of chapters on *The Great Governing Families of England*, and in 1879 he rounded off his friend James Macdonell's able and incisive book on *France Since the First Empire* by a short epilogue. His great work as a contribution to the thought of his time was the splendid historical analysis and judgment, a recapitulation of convictions long ago formed in India, which was issued in book form in 1901, and rapidly passed through several editions under the title of *Asia and Europe*. The masterly insight shown by Townsend in the perennial question of ebb and flow between the great qualities and the periodical decadences of the two climates, atmospheres, and zones of history was corroborated by the happenings of the Russo-Japanese War, of which he wrote an application in his Preface to the third edition in 1905. He looked upon the relationship of East and West as the

binding thread of History. The three races, white, black, and yellow, he was inclined to regard as fixed immutably in their respective spheres. His book is a series of apt and revealing illustrations of this general thesis. It was stimulated throughout by the cordial encouragement and approval of his friend Hutton.

Townsend's later life was uneventful. In 1898 he sold his share in *The Spectator* to Mr. St. Loe Strachey, gave up his house in which he entertained a circle of friends every Monday in Harley Street, and settled at the Manor House, Little Bookham, Surrey, where he died on Saturday, October 21st, 1911. He continued almost to the end to send in occasional and much valued contributions to *The Spectator*. He exemplified to the end his ideal for the journalist of a suppressed and unobtrusive influence. His first wife had died during his first spell of work in India. The great success of *The Friend of India* was clouded by the death of his second wife in 1859, and he married, for the third time, in 1861, Ellen Frances, daughter of John Snell, of Hendon,

Middlesex, by whom he left one son and two daughters.

No other man since Macaulay managed to make Indian life so vital and interesting until the advent of Mr. Rudyard Kipling. Yet Townsend refused again and again to reprint his articles, and to this *Asia and Europe* formed the only exception. His admirable study of "The Great Arabian" formed an organic but easily detachable portion of this work. With a little rearrangement and a very few emendations, rendered necessary by recent research, this study of the Life of Mahommed is now published in a handier and more widely accessible form.

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MAHOMMED

"THE GREAT ARABIAN"

In the whole compass of knowledge, looking down the stately line of figures whose mere names serve as the best landmarks of human history, there is not one whose life better deserves to be known, to become, as some of Shakespeare's characters have become, an integral part of thought rather than a subject of thought, than that of the Great Arabian. That a man's opinions should circulate widely, survive himself, and help to modify human action for ages after he is forgotten, is, though a wonderful, not an infrequent, phenomenon. That a man obscure in all but birth, brought up among an unlettered race, with no learning and no material resources, should by sheer force of genius extinguish idolatry through a hundred tribes, unite them into one vast aggressive movement, and, dying, leave

to men who were not his children the mastery of the Oriental world—even this career, however wondrous, is not absolutely unique. But that a man of this kind, living humbly among his equals, should stamp upon their minds the conviction that he whom they saw eat, and drink, and sleep, and commit blunders, was the vicegerent of the Almighty; that his system should survive himself for twelve centuries as a living missionary force; that it should not merely influence but utterly remould one-fourth of the human race, and that fourth the one least susceptible to change; that it should after twelve centuries still be so vital that an Asiatic, base to a degree no European can comprehend, should still, if appealed to in the name of Mahommed, start up a hero, fling away life with a glad laugh of exultation, or risk a throne to defend a guest; that after that long period, when its stateliest empires have passed away, and its greatest achievements have been forgotten, it should still be the only force able to hurl Western Asia on the iron civilisation of Europe; this is indeed a phenomenon men of every

creed and generation will at least be wise to consider. What this Mahommed was, what he did, what was and what is the secret of the complete success of his missions are not idle academic questions to amuse a leisure hour: they are of vital moment to the masters of an Empire which to-day numbers many millions of Mahommedans beneath its flag.

ARABIA IN THE DAYS OF THE GREAT ARABIAN

Englishmen habitually conceive Arabia to be a mere sandy desert, flat as sands generally are, traversed by bands of half-starved horsemen, with two small but sacred cities, and a port which an English cruiser can reduce to reason by a bombardment. In point of truth it is a vast, though secluded, peninsula, with an area one hundred thousand square miles greater than that of Europe west of the Vistula —greater, that is, than the territories of four of the five Powers, with Germany, Spain, Portugal, Greece, Scandinavia, Poland, and Italy added thereto. This enormous region, so far from being a mere sandy plain, is traversed by high ranges of mountains, filled with broad plateaux, many of them as wide as European kingdoms and full of magnificent, though dreary, and awe-inspiring scenery. Even the aridity of the soil of Arabia, though

great, is, as a political fact, seriously exaggerated, partly because the districts nearest to civilisation are the worst, partly because travellers select the winter for explorations—a time when even the fertile plains of Upper India look hideously desolate ; but chiefly because the European mind has a difficulty in realising territorial vastness, or comprehending how enormous may be the aggregate of patches of cultivation spread over a peninsula like Arabia. When some years ago the Governor of Aden was permitted to visit Lahej, he, filled like all other Englishmen with the "idea" of Arabia, was startled to find himself only a few miles from his own crackling cinders, amidst pleasant corn-lands and smiling villages, in which dwelt a population showing every sign of prosperity and content. There are thousands of such spots in Arabia, to which the eternal boundary of the desert blinds all but the keenest observers. In such oases, scattered over the broad plateaux and down the arid slopes, dwelt in the time of Mahommed a series of clans, divided politically as much as the modern nations of Europe, in origin

all *mountaineers*, with the fervid imagination, the brooding and melancholy thought which have in all ages distinguished men bred on the higher regions of the earth. What the aggregate of their numbers may have been is a point which for ages to come must remain uncertain. Orientals object to counting, and similes derived from the stars and the sands by the sea-shore satisfy only the imagination. Burckhardt believed them to be fourteen millions, and tried by the only test observers can apply, that number is within the truth. This population dwelt, when it could, in fenced cities and strong defensible villages, a section only living in tents and the desert. The clans fought and negotiated for plunder and territory; but their wars, though constant and bloody, were not internecine, and it was an understood rule that conquerors should not injure property more than they could help, fill wells, or cut down palm trees. They had, moreover, some strong bonds of national cohesion. The tribes all spoke one tongue. The great majority either were, or fancied themselves to be, of one blood. They had one form of

worship—a cult, not a creed—which compelled them to regard Mecca as sacred, and the Koreish, as the guardians of the sacred territory, as the highest among mankind. Above all, they had but one character and one social system. They were not divided by the democratic idea and the aristocratic idea, by religious feeling or sceptical feeling, by an antagonism of races or a conflict of classes. Every Arab was, in essentials, like every other, full of poetry and sentiment, with the greediness which among poverty-stricken races is a passion; with a knowledge of traditionary history, and consequently an ingrained reverence for pedigree; brave, accustomed to arms, and carrying the point of honour—revenge for insult or injury to the clan—almost to ferocity. All united, too, in the *moral* necessity of maintaining the neutrality of Mecca, and in respecting the blood of Maadd, the chieftain who, just one thousand years before, had rebuilt the power of a house which stretched back to Ishmael, and, dying, left Mecca to the descendants whom the Arabs call the Koreish.

EARLY DAYS OF MAHOMMED

Mahommed was born at Mecca in the autumn of the year 570 A.D., the posthumous son of Abdallah, a younger son of Abd al Mottalib, chief of the clan Koreish, a cadet of the highest aristocracy in a land of aristocrats, a man of the only tribe from which princes could be expected to come, a man at least as well born as the descendants of any house in Europe not actually on a throne. Englishmen, deceived by the epithet "camel-driver," so often applied to Mahommed, are accustomed to consider him low-born, and, indeed, greatly underrate his position. Poverty does not, in Asia, affect pedigree. A Brahmin begging is greater than a Sudra reigning; and, though born poor himself, Mahommed stood from his birth armoured in wealthy relatives and highly placed kinsmen. As the child was born after his father's death, according to a

custom still prevalent in Arabia among the population of the cities, he was sent at once into the desert to breathe a freer air, and lived for five years with a wandering tribe called by the Arabs the Sons of Saad. In the fifth year, Halima, his foster-mother, though fond of the child, was frightened by some symptoms of epilepsy, and restored him to his mother Amina; but Mahommed never forgot the kindness he had received. Thirty years afterwards, when he had become comparatively wealthy, he raised Halima from her poverty, and, after the lapse of half a century, the appeal of his foster-father instantly sufficed to release his clan, while his adopted relatives were offered wealth and position at his will. The only recorded incident of his childhood, apart from legends, was a visit to Medina with his mother; a visit which stamped itself so strongly on his memory, that at fifty he remembered every detail. On her return she died, leaving Mahommed, still a child, to the care of his grandfather, Abd al Mottalib. The latter speedily followed, and all power in Mecca passed to another

branch of the Koreish, and away from his own immediate connections. A wealthy and powerful uncle, Abu Talib, took charge of the boy, and became so attached to him that, after a life passed in struggles on his behalf, his last words were a prayer to his kinsmen to protect his nephew. With this uncle he made a journey into Syria, then nominally a Christian country, and took some part in a feud called the Sacrilegious War, because it began in the holy month, and violated, in the end, the sacred territory. Every year, too, he was present at the annual fair attended by Christians from Syria, Jews from the neighbourhood, and representatives of all the tribes of Arabia ; and listened, as he tells us in the Koran, to the eloquent preaching of the Syrian Bishop Koss, and to the orators of the tribes as they contended with each other for the palm of eloquence. He was present also at a scene which, if he had not himself proscribed all art, his followers in after ages would have loved to paint. Owing to the absence of any central authority, Mecca was full of disorder, and the heads of four sub-clans of the Koreish,

tired of the misery before them, met together at night with Mahommed in their midst and swore "by the avenging Deity to take the part of the oppressed, and see his claim fulfilled so long as a drop of water remained in the ocean, or to satisfy the claim from their own resources." Mahommed in after-life declared that he would not lose the recollection of having been present when that oath was taken for the choicest camel in all Arabia. Though thus admitted to council in right of his birth, his daily work was that of a shepherd, an office then deemed honourable, and by his own account he was singularly free from vice of every kind. The silent, lonely life must have done much to strengthen a mind naturally tender, and increase that habit of brooding thought to which he was addicted through life, and for which he had presently an ampler opportunity.

MARRIAGE AND THE BEGINNING OF THE MISSION

MAHOMMED was twenty-five years old before any change took place in his career; and there is no reason to believe that his opinions were in the smallest degree in advance of those entertained by the same class of his countrymen. He was then asked by his uncle to take charge of a caravan which Khadija, a wealthy widow of their house, was about to despatch to Syria. He accepted the office and travelled to Bostra, a place about sixty miles beyond the Jordan, whence he returned without adventure, and with a fair but moderate profit of cent per cent on the caravan. None of this profit was for himself; but during the journey he had gained something more valuable than his salary. That royal sweetness of nature which from boyhood distinguished Mahommed had so impressed a slave attached to the caravan

that, on his return, he besought his leader to present himself to the widow with the tidings of his successful merchandise. The slave himself never tired of sounding the praises of the handsome agent, and Khadija, a comely widow, fell deeply in love with him. She is said by Arabs to have been forty; but as she subsequently bore him six children, her age has probably been exaggerated. She gained her father's consent while he was tipsy, and offered Mahommed marriage, and his instant acceptance raised him at once to a place among the wealthy men of the city. The union was a happy one for thirty years. Khadija left him entirely to his meditations, relieving him of all cares of business; and Mahommed, giving full swing to his natural temperament, wandered incessantly among the mountains which overlook Mecca, feeding his heart with reverie. None but those who have lived long among Asiatics can understand how an Oriental mind can brood over an idea. It is perhaps the most marked distinction between him and the Western man: the European thinks, the Oriental

only reflects, and if left to himself the idea, turned over and over endlessly in his mind, hardens into the consistency of steel. Thenceforward it is part of the fibre of his mind, something on which argument is lost, on which he, at all times and in all circumstances, bases immediate action. Mahommed had not, as popular histories aver, given himself up to inquiries into Christianity and Judaism, nor is there any evidence that he ever talked with a Christian monk named Sergius or Nestorius, nor that he had ever been taught by a follower of the Jewish Scripture; but he had from his earliest days been surrounded by the Jewish tribes settled in Arabia, and had learnt vaguely and imperfectly their more imaginative traditions, derived, it would seem, from the source whence Josephus derived his antiquities. He had also talked with Christian slaves, particularly an acute Greek, who became a disciple; and his mind brooded over the possibility of reconciling these creeds with the pagan cult of Arabia. Gradually, perhaps very early, a horror of idol-worship arose in his mind, a belief in one

true impersonal and absolute Deity, so strong and vivid as to colour his entire future life. How long his faith was in development he has not informed us ; but, once developed, it took entire possession of his mind. Brooding for months in solitude on the tops of the Hira range, he gradually obtained that ecstatic conviction, which in better creeds their followers term conversion, and with that conviction came the impression that it had been given for a purpose ; that he had been selected to become the Messenger of the Most High, to preach the unity of the Godhead to all mankind. Thenceforward he esteemed himself a specially chosen instrument, one whose reveries were revelations ; and throughout his further life, under the most extreme temptation and in the darkest adversity, Mahommed never swerved from his central belief : " God is the God : I am the sent of God." This and not the doctrine of conversion by the sword was what he announced to his household ; and it is perhaps the most marvellous fact in his history, that the three nearest to him, nearer than any valet ever was to his master,

accepted his assurance of Divine commission. Khadija his wife, Ali his nephew, and Zeid his freedman believed in his mission, treasured up the bursts of mystic poetry in which his first convictions were expressed, and after twenty years of suffering, protracted through every conceivable variety of disaster, remained steadfast in the faith that this man was verily sent of God.

THE PROPHET PROCLAIMED

Mahommed was in his forty-first year when he first announced to the sneering Meccans that God had elected him Prophet of a Faith which as its first step involved their secular ruin. *Their* importance depended on their character as hereditary guardians of Ozza and Lat, the two idols of the sacred shrine. If idolatry were a crime their office ended, and with it their rank in Arabia, the rich tribute of the tribes, the gains of the central mart, and the incalculable advantages of the one city which no Arab dared attack. In exchange for this they were offered an idea ; for the elevation of Mecca was not Mahommed's original intention—he rather leaned to Jerusalem. They rejected him without any great excitement or attention, for he was too strongly protected to be attacked. Some few, however, chiefly among his own connections, confided in him, and in accept-

ing him accepted thrones and places in the front rank of history. Abu Bekr—refugee, soldier, vizier, caliph—always the bosom friend and believing disciple of his kinsman, listened to the new revelation gladly. Saad, the next disciple, was a nephew of Mahommed's mother, Amina ; Zoheir, the next, a nephew of Khadija ; Othman, the next, a grandson of Abd al Mutalib, Mahommed's grandfather ; and Abdul Ruhaman, the fifth, was of the Beni Zohra, Amina's clan. Numerous slaves also announced their adhesion to the new opinions. Abu Bekr exhausted great wealth for an Arab in purchasing slaves who had been persecuted for their admiration of Mahommed, and from that day to this Islam has been distinguished by its adherence to one high principle. The slave who embraces Islam is free ; not simply a freed man, but a free citizen, the equal of all save the Sultan, competent *de facto* as well as *de jure* to all and every office in the state. After four years of preaching there were but few, not five-score, yet sufficient to arouse discontent and enmity. The Koreish dared not attack Mahommed himself, for

he was protected by his relatives; but they jeered at him and threatened his disciples till so fierce became the persecution that Mahommed sent some of his followers to Abyssinia, and to gain them protection from assault even tried a momentary concession to idolatry. His weakness lasted only a few days, and the storm intensified by disappointment raged more violently than ever. Not all the influence of his uncle, Abu Talib, could restrain the Koreish from proceeding to extremities when, in the sixth year of his preaching, Omar and Hamza, two powerful citizens, professed themselves disciples. They solemnly placed all the descendants of Hashim, Mahommed's great-grandfather, under the ban, refused to intermarry with them, or trade with them, or supply them with food, and drove them *en masse* into the quarter occupied by the relatives and descendants of Abu Talib. There they were cut off from the city, none venturing to sell them anything except by stealth, and none of them daring to go out except during the holy month, when Mecca is a sanctuary to all Arabs In this

imprisonment the Prophet and his followers remained three years, until his enemies, wearied out, accepted the accidental destruction of the paper on which the ban was written as a sign that God willed the interdict to be lifted. The release, however, was followed by the deaths of Khadija and Abu Talib, and at the tenth year of his ministry Mahommed found himself with his means diminished, his band of followers not increased, his protector dead, and the Koreish at last apparently at liberty to extirpate his disciples. In this extremity he resolved on an enterprise which would alone suffice to prove his own belief in his mission. Followed only by Zeid, he set out for Tayif, a city sixty or seventy miles from Mecca, inhabited by pagans of a peculiarly bigoted character, and boldly appealed to its people for aid, protection, and belief. They stoned him out of the city, and he returned to Mecca wounded and defeated, calmly repeating to himself, "Thy anger, O Lord, alone I dread." The Koreish were exulting in the certainty of victory when aid suddenly appeared in another quarter.

THE PROPHET PROCLAIMED

In the season of pilgrimage, A.D. 620, Mahommed, who always preached to the crowds which at that season gathered from all parts to Mecca, had attracted the regard of a few pilgrims from the rival though inferior city of Medina. The Jews were powerful in Medina, and the idolaters there had gathered from them a vague idea that a mighty prophet was at hand, whom it was advisable for them speedily to conciliate. Five or six of them took Mahommed to be the prophet expected, and they promised on the next pilgrimage to bring him more of their brethren. At the next pilgrimage the number of the Medinese was doubled, and twelve converts took the oath of allegiance to Mahommed. Again they were sent home, and again Mahommed, with the stolid patience which in Europe belongs only to the greatest, and in Asia to everybody, waited through the year in peace. He kept his followers in heart by occasional revelations, and with a pride whose audacity compels admiration chose this year for the assumption of authority in all things by the announcement that " Whoso obeyeth not God and

His Prophet, verily to him shall be the fire of hell." The year passed at last, and this time a numerous band, seventy-three men in all, met him from Medina, and in the dead of night, in the stony valley of Akaba, swore to obey Mahommed and protect him with their lives.

THE FLIGHT TO MEDINA

The Great Arabian had indeed reached a turning-point in his life's career. Eight years of public preaching and teaching the unity of God had ended in his flight from the city in which his ancestors had reigned, with the loss of his patrimony and that of his scanty following. But his converts, if few, had faith in their leader, and their leader had faith in himself, as the Messenger appointed by God to a task of which the end was not yet. Cautious, shrewd, sound in his judgment of men, yet ready to run risks which would have daunted all but the boldest few, Mahommed welcomed the invitation to go to Medina where an ancient feud held the tribes asunder. All who joined the movement swore to observe the conditions of Islam, to abstain from adultery, theft, infanticide, and lying, to obey Mahommed in all things lawful and honest, and to lay down their lives in

defence of the faith of the Prophet. Two Medinese chiefs set an example which others soon followed of destroying their idols. The flight to Medina was hastened by the knowledge that his projects had been discovered by the Koreish, who leagued themselves to kill him in a covenant, so that every tribe, except that to which Mahommed belonged, should share the guilt of bloodshed within the sacred city. When his enemies sought him to take his life, he had fled. With him went Abu Bekr, and fearful of pursuit they ascended the mountain Thaur, and there lived three days, hunted by the Koreish, who at one time passed over the cave in which they lay concealed, and fed by a shepherd formerly in the employ of Abu Bekr. Food, powerful camels, a trusty and reliable guide had been provided, and Mahommed reached the outskirts of Medina in safety. After a halt of a few days to ascertain the state of opinion in the town, he entered the city on a Friday, a day thenceforward set apart for public worship throughout the Moslem world, and, throwing the reins on the neck of his camel, Al

Saswa, bade her seek her resting-place through the rejoicing crowds. Al Saswa halted in an open courtyard, and Mahommed descended and marked out the site for his first house, and the mosque in which pilgrims to Medina still recall his flight.

The dislocated social condition universal through Arabia enabled him to exercise direct and sole sovereignty over his own followers, and their attachment, his own popularity, and the mysterious awe with which he began to be regarded, gave him vast influence over the inhabitants; but of direct authority he had scarcely any. Each tribe governed itself. The two strongest, the Ben-i-Khazraj and the Ben-i-Aus, were passively favourable, but he had frequently to conciliate them, and Abdallah, the chieftain of the first-named clan, regarded him with strong jealousy and disfavour. He would have been Prince of Medina but for Mahommed's arrival, and though he remained through life an ally, he pressed his influence arrogantly, and has the honour of being the only man who ever turned Mahommed from a declared purpose. The remaining tribes seem to

have been friendly, with the exception of the Jews, who were numerous and powerful, and who gradually became objects of intense dislike to Mahommed. He had once entertained the idea of taking them into his religious system, and he made on his arrival a covenant with one tribe, granting them privileges very similar to those enjoyed in aftertimes by the Jews of Cordova. He soon, however, when in actual contact with them, discovered what so many princes had discovered before and since, that Judaism cannot by its very nature coalesce with any other creed, and the revelations gradually became hostile to their claims. The Jews fell back entirely, and as Mahommed had not discovered the second truth, that force applied to Jews is waste of power, he assumed a position of open hostility to the tribes.

For the first six months after his arrival he busied himself with the organisation of his faith. The practice of lustration was regularly introduced. The daily prayers were reduced to five. The first Kebleh Jerusalem was exchanged for

Mecca, thus linking Islam with the ancient pagan cult instead of Judaism, and the month Ramadhan was selected as the period of annual fasting. The day of fast-breaking was also appointed, and finally Mahommed, in obedience to a dream related by a disciple, bade a negro slave ascend to the top of a lofty house and there cry aloud at the appointed times, "Prayer is better than sleep; prayer is better than sleep!" Even Alexander the Great is in Asia an unknown personage by the side of the slave Billal, whose cry to this day summons at the same hours a sixth of the human race to the same devotions. As soon as the mosque was completed Mahommed recommenced his personal teaching, preaching from the top of the steps of a high pulpit, in the modern Protestant style. The religious life of Islam was then complete, and to the day of his death the Prophet added only to what may be called the dogmas of jurisprudence. For nearly two years he continued this course of life, slowly the while building up his personal authority. Abdallah, the chief of the Ben-i-Khazraj,

was troublesome, and the Jews were sarcastic; but day by day the number of his followers increased. The people came over to his side. Each man as he joined him gave up his ties of tribe and kinsmanship, and bound himself a subject of Mahommed alone. He began, also, to use his followers to arms, organising small expeditions against the Koreish caravans; and, although these at first were unsuccessful, they accustomed the faithful to the idea of hostilities with the sacred clan, and to habits of military obedience. In three of these forays he commanded in person, and in three the command passed with the Prophet's white banner to his nominee. This was at first always a Medinese chief, and it was not till the third expedition that he ventured to select a commander solely for devotion to himself, and entrust the white banner to the faithful Zeid. The uniform escape of the Koreish induced Mahommed at length to suspect treachery; and on the seventh expedition, in November, 623, he sent a Meccan named Abdallah in command, with sealed instructions. This expedition

succeeded, but the success was gained in the holy month, and Mahommed for some days had the booty laid aside. At last he relented, his delay having fully established the principle that the disposal of booty rested with him; and, reserving one-fifth for his own use, or rather for that of the State, he divided the spoil. It was shortly after this success that the series of revelations commenced, declaring war against the infidel a main duty of the faithful; and the rich spoil and the splendid future proved too much for the men of Medina. Thenceforward open opposition within the city disappeared; and when, in January, 624, Mahommed once more raised his standard, he was followed by the Medinese as readily as by his own people. He nominated a governor during his absence, as if the city belonged to himself alone; and mustering his forces outside the walls, found that it had increased from the eighty refugees to three hundred and five.

His object was to intercept the caravan which, with Abu Sofian, chief of the Koreish, at its head, was crawling from Syria

down the coast of the Red Sea on its way to Mecca. With this view he marched rapidly to Badr, where the Meccan road strikes the great Syrian route; but he had, as usual, been betrayed by some secret friend of the Koreish among the Medinese. Abu Sofian hurried on a swift messenger to Mecca imploring aid, while he himself, leaving the coast route, struck with his caravan direct for the city, which he reached in safety. The Koreish, however, were weary of Mahommed's audacity, and, though still divided among themselves as to his claim of kindred, pushed their army of relief forward to Badr, determined to make a signal example. Mahommed was equally eager, and his followers, when consulted, pledged themselves to follow him to the world's end. Fanaticism had destroyed their remembrance of the ties of kindred, and they prayed openly for the destruction of their relatives. They arrived first upon the field, a sandy valley traversed by a small spring which feeds a series of small cisterns. Mahommed filled them all except the one nearest to the enemy, and bade his followers stand on the defensive,

and regard that cistern as their citadel. The Koreish crossed the low hills in front of this position on January 13th, 624, and began the action in the true Arabian and Homeric style. Three warriors stepping forward challenged the whole of the faithful, and Mahommed, accepting the challenge, ordered three of his relatives, Ali, Hamza, and Obeida, to stand forward. The combat ended in their favour, and the Mahommedans, maddened with excitement and favoured by the wind which blew a storm of dust in the faces of the Koreish, charged upon a force three times the number of their own with irresistible effect. The Koreish maintained their reputation; but the Moslems craved death as much as victory, and acts such as are ordinarily only dictated by despair signalised their hope of heaven. Omeir, a lad of sixteen, flung away the dates he was eating with a vow to eat the next in paradise; and Muadz-ibn-Amr, with his arm cut through at the shoulder, tore off the limb as it hung by the skin, bound the wound, and fought on unmindful. Against men of this temper ordinary courage was unavailing, and the

Koreish, abandoning forty-nine bodies and the same number of prisoners, all their animals and their baggage, fled precipitately on the road to Mecca. Six of the prisoners were executed as the avowed enemies of Mahommed or his creed, but the remainder were treated with a kindness they publicly acknowledged, and most of them embraced the faith. Every man in the army had at least two camels out of the spoil, and Mahommed averred boldly that Badr was the visible seal of Islam, a battle won by the immediate interposition of the Almighty on behalf of His Prophet. On his return he assumed the full authority of a prince over the city; ordered Asma, a Jewess who had published satirical verses against him, to be put to death, slew a Jew guilty of the same offence, and besieged the Beni Cainucaa, a Jewish tribe of Medina, in their own faubourg. The Jews, after a siege of fifteen days, submitted at discretion; and Mahommed, who held them to be rebels and infidels, at once ordered them to execution. He was compelled, however, to yield to the remonstrance of Abdallah, the chief of the

Ben-i-Khazraj, and *patronus* of the Jewish clans, and still too powerful to be safely or irremediably offended. Expedition now followed on expedition. The Ben-i-Suleim and the Ben-i-Ghatafan were successively attacked and plundered; a roving band of the Koreish, headed by their leader Abu Sofian, were repulsed; and at last the annual Meccan caravan, laden with bars of silver for the purchase of goods in Syria, was captured, yielding to every man in the army 800 dirhems, a fortune in a country where a dirhem a day is considered fair pay for the governor of a great city. Every expedition increased the confidence of Mahommed's followers, and developed the habit of obedience, until at length the Prophet's whisper was sufficient sentence of death, and the Moslem exulted in their willingness to slay their own brothers at his command. A central authority thus obeyed doubled the active force of Medina. There alone in Arabia a single man of commanding ability could plan without counsellors, and command without explaining his objects. There, too, alone in Arabia was at work the strangely vivifying

principle which, for want of a better term, we must style equality.

The operation of this principle as one of the many causes which favoured the development of Islam has been too frequently overlooked. Despotisms very often, though not always, produce an imperfect equality. In Russia, for example, though the favour of a prince can raise a serf into a prince, still the prince has under all other circumstances the advantage over the serf. Under Mahommed, however, there sprang up *ex necessitate rei* a form of democratic equality more absolute than any the world has elsewhere seen. Claims of birth and wealth could be of no value in the presence of a master whose favour implied the favour of the Deity. The proudest Arab could not murmur if God chose a slave like Zeid to be leader of armies and visibly confirmed His choice with the seal of victory. It was a principle, also, of the new sect that Islam extinguished all relations. The slave, once a Moslem, was free; the foe, once a Moslem, was dearer than any kinsman; the pagan, once a Moslem, might preach, if the Prophet bade, to

attentive listeners. Mahommed was enabled therefore at all times to command the absolute aid of every man of capacity within his ranks. No officers of his threw up their commissions because they were superseded. If he selected a child, what then? could not God give victory to a child? Moreover, all the latent forces which social order restrains were instantly at his disposal. Every strong man, kept down by circumstances, had an instinctive desire to believe in the faith which removed at a stroke every obstacle to a career. To this hour this principle is still of vital importance in all Mahommedan countries. A dozen times has a Sultan, utterly ruined, stooped among his people, found in a water-carrier, a tobacconist, a slave, a renegade, the required man, raised him in a day to power, and supported him to save the empire. If the snuff-dealer can rule Egypt, why should he not rule Egypt? He is as near to God as any other Mussulman, save only the heir of the Caliphate; and accordingly Mehemet Ali finds birth, trade, and want of education no obstacles in his path. The pariah who in Madras

turns Christian is a pariah still ; but if he turns Mussulman, the proudest Mussulman noble will, if he rises, give him his daughter, or serve him as a sovereign, without a thought of his descent. Mahommed, like all real kings, knew men when he saw them ; gave power to Omar, the man of blue-blood, or Zeid, the slave, indifferently, and found therefore invariably that the special talent he wanted was at his command. These immense advantages could not, however, preserve Mahommed invariably from disaster. In the middle of January, 625, three years after he had reached Medina, the Koreish determined once for all to end the quarrel with their dangerous adversary. Summoning all their allies, and devoting all the treasure saved in Abu Sofian's caravan to military purposes, they raised, what was then in Arabia, a formidable force. Neither then nor at any time were the Arabs exclusively or mainly cavalry. They admired and cherished horses, and most men could ride ; but the possession of a horse was a sign of wealth, and among the mountaineers and citizens by no means a common one. The army,

therefore, though 3000 in number, comprised only 200 horse, and its principal reliance was on 700 footmen equipped in mail, and in the archers who did duty, as in feudal Europe, for light troops. Mahommed, though at first inclined to stand on the defensive, yielded to the ardour of his younger followers, and marched out of Medina with a force which victory, conversions, and new hope had swelled from the 300 of Badr to 1000 strong. Of this force, however, 300, commanded by Abdallah, chief of the Ben-i-Khazraj, indignant at Mahommed's hostility to the Jews, deserted and returned to Medina; the remainder, though not a fourth of their enemies in number, determined to give them battle, and accordingly took up their position on a small stony plain, above which rose arid and red the frowning rocks of the mountain Ohod. The battle began as usual in a series of single combats, in which, of course, those who believed death only to be an entrance to paradise had signally the advantage. Excited by perpetual small successes, and perhaps rendered imprudent by their confident

hope of Divine aid, the Mussulmans pressed on too rapidly, pierced the enemy's line and began plundering the baggage. The rear-guard joined in this exciting game, and the Koreish horse, seeing their opportunity, swept down on the Moslem from behind. There was a panic, a mad flight, and a rally round the person of the Prophet. Mahommed was felled to the ground, and for a few minutes the course of history was doubtful; but his personal friends protected his body, raised him, and with the broken army made for the rocks and defiles of Ohod. The victors approached and taunted their defeated enemies; but a charge *up* the rocks, in the teeth of Moslem soldiers, was beyond their courage, and they retired slowly to their own city. The Moslem also returned to Medina, to find every element of disaffection at work. Seventy-four of the army had fallen, and every man was in an Arab tribe known and classed like an English noble. The charm of invincibility which attached to the Prophet was shattered, the Jews were sarcastic, and the Medinese openly murmured that if Badr were the seal of Islam,

Ohod showed the visible wrath of the Almighty. The refugees, however, had seen worse days than these. The Prophet stood, as usual in disaster, firm and gentle. He passed over Abdallah's desertion, ordered a mock pursuit of the Koreish, which gave the talkers something to discuss, comforted the faithful and threatened the wrath of God on the disaffected. The magic eloquence of the Prophet completed the work. Never was Mahommed stronger with his followers than a month after the defeat of Ohod.

The remainder of the year (625) passed in expeditions of various issue. The Ben-i-Asad, a powerful clan who were connected with the Koreish, and raised the standard against Medina, were plundered and dispersed; but, on the other hand, seventy Moslem were decoyed by the Ben-i-Amar into their hands under pretext of desiring teachers for the faith and treacherously put to death. The Ben-i-Nadhir, a Jewish tribe, were driven from their possessions, and their estates divided among the refugees, who thus rose into instant affluence. With 1500 men Mahommed main-

tained his camp for eight days at Badr, waiting attack from the Arab world; and next year he advanced by a march of more than a month along the border of Syria. The Ben-i-Mustalick had, it would seem, menaced him; but the tribe was surrounded, and the prisoners, after a short hesitation, embraced the creed of Medina. These petty expeditions were, however, only the preparations for a new danger.

The Koreish could neither forgive Mahommed nor escape the idea that he was to them an imminent and ever-pressing peril. They resolved on an effort which gives a high idea at once of their strength and weakness. Summoning all their allies they advanced, in February, 627, on Medina, and besieged it with an army of 10,000 men. Such a force menaced the city with destruction, but its hour had not arrived. Mahommed had in his ranks a man who knew something of Roman * fortifications, and when the Meccans arrived under the walls they found themselves confronted by a deep ditch. They exclaimed loudly against the cowardice of the device, but they could

* Or Persian, according to other authorities.

not pass the ditch and fell back on stratagem. They made an agreement with the strongest Jewish tribe left in the city, the Koreitza, to attack Mahommed from behind, while they themselves essayed to pass the trench. Mahommed, however, discovered the plot, and, by a clever device which is quite within allowable military expedients, contrived to make each party think the other was watching to betray them. The grand attack therefore failed ignominiously ; a few Koreish only leaping the trench, to be speared without mercy. An Arab army had no commissariat. Provisions ran short, the weather was wretched, and at last, after fifteen days of the siege, Abu Sofian, irritated to madness by personal discomfort, leaped on his horse and rode away to Mecca. The great army melted away, and Mahommed turned on his domestic foes. He besieged the Koreitza in their faubourg, and after a brief resistance they surrendered at discretion. The Ben-i-Aus begged hard for their lives as old allies, and Mahommed promised that the doom of the Jews should be fixed by a man of the allied clan. He

selected Sad-ibn-Muadz, who accepted the office, and took an oath from the people to stand by his decision. To the dismay of his kinsmen, rearing his mighty figure above the crowd, he pronounced the awful sentence—the men to death, the women to slavery; and the doom was accepted by Mahommed. The Koreitza, eight hundred in number, were slain in batches and the bodies buried, while the women were carried away. "Islam has cut all ties" was the stern comment of the allies of the murdered tribe. This was the worst deed ever sanctioned by Mahommed, but there is this to be said in his defence. He undoubtedly regarded these men as traitors as well as rebels, and there is not the slightest evidence that the Koreitza, even by European codes, had not deserved their doom. They had plotted against their own allies on the battlefield, and there is no European general who would not have pronounced them worthy of death, however strongly the modern respect for life might have modified his actual sentence. In this affair, as in the execution of one or two private individuals, Mahommed acted

simply as an Oriental prince, neither better nor worse ; and personal enmity influenced his decisions but little.

The fifth year of the Hegira, A.D. 627, passed away in comparative tranquillity. Mahommed still seemed far from his aim—the mastery of Arabia ; but his expeditions continued, and every foray brought him wealth, disciples, and increase of reputation. In one of these raids his men punished some prisoners guilty of treachery in a manner so barbarous that Mahommed published a revelation making death by the sword, cord, or crucifixion, the only capital punishments a Moslem could lawfully inflict. The mutilation of the hand was alone retained for larceny, a punishment certainly cruel, but not so especially cruel in relation to the crime as Europeans are apt to believe. All Asiatics hold larceny a crime only second to murder. Englishmen of the educated class, rich in all necessaries, and habitually careless, cannot even conceive the irritation the practice of small theft creates in a poverty-stricken community, to whom everything is valuable, and by whom everything is

remembered. They will not endure it; and to this day the first charge of a native of India against the British Government is its leniency to larceny, and the second most frequent cause of murder is the determination of the people to punish theft with corporal punishment carried to an extreme. We rightly condemn mutilation, but if we seek to throw discredit on Mahommed, let us remember that it is not a century since English bankers clamoured for the retention of death as the only true punishment for forgery.

In the sixth year of the flight, A.D. 628, Mahommed determined to bring himself once more in contact with the representatives of all Arabia by attending the annual pilgrimage to Mecca. He started with a powerful force, hoping, apparently, that the Meccans would be too jealous for the prerogative of their city to refuse entrance even to him. He was disappointed, and in his anxiety to be once more enabled to visit the city he so greatly loved, he signed a treaty of amity with his determined foes. Under its provisions, which were to be valid for ten years, all Arabs who chose

were to join him without opposition from the Koreish, and all Moslems who chose were to abandon him without punishment. The Meccans, moreover, were to give up the shrine to his followers for three days in every year. Entrance for that year was, however, refused, and Mahommed returned to send ambassadors abroad to four of the sovereigns whose reputation had reached Arabia. Heraclius, Emperor of Byzantium, then in the full tide of victory over Chosroes, received the summons to embrace Islam and obey the Prophet in a plainly worded missive which, of course, he laid aside ; Siroes, King of Persia, tore up his missive, provoking from Mahommed the exclamation that his kingdom should be similarly torn in pieces ; Mukoukas, the Roman, or rather Greek, Governor of Egypt, had a nearer view of the power of his strange correspondent. He answered kindly, and sent to Mahommed a present of two Coptic slave girls, one of whom, Mary, is the heroine of many a Mussulman legend, and would, had her son Ibrahim lived, have been in all probability regarded to this day as the sainted mother of dynas-

ties. The Prince of Abyssinia alone, it is said, obeyed the missive, and even that solitary concession rests on no evidence but Mahommedan tradition, and Abyssinia remains Christian to this day. The embassies are the only positive indications of that vast ambition which the achievements of his successors reflected back upon his character. Every creed claims to be universal; but that Mahommed ever contemplated distinctly the conquest of the world is more than doubtful. He hoped, perhaps, for Syria, but his distinct policy was limited to Syria, and the first mighty outflow of Arabia upon civilisation was caused by the necessity of finding occupation for the tribes who groaned and fretted under the yoke of his successor.

In A.D. 628 Mahommed conquered Kheibar, one of the richest valleys in Arabia, occupied by Jews, and divided the lands among his followers. It was a woman of this tribe who, by giving him a poisoned shoulder of mutton, laid, in Mussulman ideas, the foundation of the disease which afterwards proved mortal. Mahommed was now sixty years old, and it seems clear that

he never swallowed any of the poison, which was probably the well-known *datura*, or juice of the hemlock. In the following year he completed his pledge of visiting Mecca, and the Koreish, tired with contest, adhered to their agreement. For three days he was placed in possession of the shrine, and there for the first time he fulfilled all the appointed rites of Islam in the appointed centre of the faith. He retired on the expiration of the three days, but the hour was drawing near when the labour of a life was to be crowned with the full measure of success.

THE PROPHET AT MECCA

THE Prophet was growing old, and had as yet done little which could survive his death. He was master of Medina, it is true, general of a powerful army, suzerain of numerous tribes, and with a reputation which extended wherever the Arab orators contended for eloquence; but he was still only a local notability. The Arabs still looked to Mecca as the pivot on which the politics of the peninsula ought to turn; till Mecca was gained, Arabia as a whole was unsubdued, and the conquest of the sacred city became an object of intense burning desire. He resolved to make a final effort to secure it, and the Koreish gave him a fair opportunity. They allowed an allied sept to harry a small Meccan clan because they adhered to Mahommed, and thus, whether wilfully or otherwise, broke the treaty of amity. The injured family, the Ben-i-Khozaa, applied to

Mahommed for redress, which he promised with a solemn asseveration. He at once raised his standard, and summoning his allies, found himself at the head of eight thousand men. With this army he marched suddenly on Mecca, where a great change had apparently occurred. Abu Sofian had either been wearied out, or was aware that resistance was hopeless, while the Koreish may be presumed to have become doubtful of the wisdom of further war. They made no preparations for resistance, and Abu Sofian, who had gone out to reconnoitre, was taken, apparently a willing prisoner, to Mahommed. What a moment it must have been for him when he saw the great leader of the Koreish a suppliant at his feet, tardily owning the faith! With supreme political wisdom Mahommed resolved on the policy of forbearance and generosity. On the following morning Mahommed stood at last lord of the city from which, eight years before, he had fled a hunted fugitive. It was still filled with enemies, but the magnitude of his triumph had softened his heart and he spared all save four, the exceptions being men who

had injured or insulted him or his family, and a woman who had circulated satirical verses, an offence Mahommed never forgave. The effect of this generous conduct was instantly apparent. The Meccans gave in their adhesion in a body. The strength thus added to Mahommed was important, but before using it Mecca was to be cleared of idolatry. The pictures of angels within the shrine had been removed on his first entry, and now Mahommed ordered the idols to be hewn down ; Ozza and Lat fell with a terrible crash, and Mahommed, as he stood gazing on the destruction, an old man with the work of twenty years at last accomplished, must have felt that he had not lived in vain. With Ozza and Lat, though he knew it not, crashed down the whole fabric of Arabian idolatry ; and the land, though for twelve hundred years rent with strife, though the tribes whom he bound together have fallen asunder, and all other traditions have revived, has never gone back—never showed the desire to go back—to pagan worship. That one work, small or great, terminated then ; but to Mahommed it

seemed as if too much was still left to do.

Scarcely had Mecca been purified when the Prophet summoned its subject clans, and with an army swelled to twelve thousand men set out to subjugate Tayif, the city which had stoned him when, alone and unarmed, he visited it to demand obedience in the name of the Most High to a banished and powerless member of the Koreish. On his road he was met by the Ben-i-Hawazin, the powerful tribe settled round Tayif, and narrowly escaped defeat. The Hawazin charged down a defile, and the army of Islam, taken by surprise, fell into a panic, and commenced a precipitate retreat. Mahommed, however, knew that no army existed in Arabia competent to face his own, and, standing firm, he ordered a follower of stentorian lungs to summon the Medinese to his standard. They rallied round him instantly, and the dismayed Mahommedans, re-forming behind them, charged upon the Ben-i-Hawazin. The victory was complete, and the Prophet passed on unmolested to Tayif. He failed, however, before the city, chiefly from the

Arab impossibility of keeping an army together without commissariat, and he returned to Mecca. The property of the Hawazin was divided, and Mahommed exhausted his personal wealth in enriching his new allies. So lavish, indeed, were his gifts that the Medinese murmured, and Mahommed had for the fiftieth time to appeal to his rare gift of eloquence to allay their discontent. The attack on Tayif was resumed, and the Prophet made use of siege artillery against it. The city was stoutly defended, but a converted chief agreed to keep the inhabitants within the walls, and tired out by a blockade which seemed endless, the citizens gave way. They asked privilege after privilege—exemption from obedience, exemption from prayer, the safety of their idols—but Mahommed would not yield; and stipulating only for the safety of a hunting-forest, they surrendered themselves into his hands. He was by this time at home in Medina, whence he had sent forth his collectors throughout the tribes which acknowledged his rule to collect the tithes. A *new* income-tax of ten per cent would be

felt as onerous even in England; but the collectors were only once resisted, and usually welcomed with acclamation. Moreover, either from policy or really alarmed, as he alleged, at a rumour that the Greek Emperor was about to march on him, he ordered a general levy of his followers. His power was not consolidated even in the Hejaz, and many of the Arabs refused to obey. The Medinese, weary with exertion, stayed at home; but still the gathering proved that the fugitive had become a mighty prince. An army such as had never been seen in Arabia, an army of twenty thousand foot and ten thousand cavalry, followed him to the Syrian border, and subdued for him the whole of the Christian or semi-Christian tribes in the north. The Prophet felt that the time had come. All Arabs, save of the faith, were solemnly interdicted from Mecca, and a new revelation declared that the object of Islam was the extirpation of idolatry. Conversions now flowed in fast, and the tenth year of the Hegira was a year of embassies. The "King" of Oman surrendered all authority to Ma-

hommed's lieutenant, Amru. The Princes of Yemen, the Himyarite dynasty (the foundations of whose palaces have been discovered at Aden), accepted the new faith. The Hadramaut followed the example; and, as each tribe gave way, assessors armed with the new code entered their territory, terminated mildly all existing authorities and bound the district fast to Islam and Mahommed. The great tribe of the Ben-i-Aamir was almost the last to yield; but it yielded, and in 630 the Prophet, master of Arabia, uttered his final address to the representatives of the peninsula, assembled in pilgrimage at Mecca. Though inartistic in form, there can hardly be in literature a nobler effort of the highest kind of oratory, of the rhetoric which conveys at once guidance and command, than this last address of the Great Arabian, in which he solemnly proclaimed throughout Arabia a law of universal brotherhood.

In the eleventh year of the Flight, while still only sixty-three, he issued orders for a levy to subjugate the Syrian desert, and invested Osma, a lad, but the son of Zeid,

with the supreme command; but his hour had arrived. In the beginning of Safar a deadly fever came upon him, and he announced to the weeping congregation assembled in the mosque at Medina his own approaching decease. The exertion increased the disease, and after four days of suffering, during which the burden of his speech was always of suffering as an expiation for sin, he gradually sank, retaining, however, to the last somewhat of the ancient fire. With a quaint touch of satiric humour, he punished all his wives for giving him physic by making them take it too, and on Monday he even joined in the prayers for his own recovery in the mosque. This, however, was his last effort; and on June 8th, 632, exclaiming at intervals, "The Lord grant me pardon," "Pardon," "The blessed companionship on high," he stretched himself gently and died in the arms of Ayesha, his favourite wife.

THE MAN

Of middle height and spare, of amazing strength, with his cheek still ruddy, and his beard falling in black waves just streaked with silver to his waist, his manner soft to feminine grace, his eye black, restless, and slightly bloodshot, a noble forehead, Mahommed must have looked as fit to be a leader of men as any the Arabs had ever seen. Upon his character as a prince, a leader of men, there can be little controversy. No man in history ever rose to dominion with fewer heavy stains upon his character; none ever exhibited more constancy, or a more serene unwavering wisdom. In the first test of greatness, wealth of loving friends, none ever approached Mahommed. In him immutable will made his manner gentle and his speech kindly, and conferred that grave dignity and consistent habit of thought before which the mass of men bend as easily as

clay to the potter. Modesty and kindness, patience, self-denial, and generosity marked his relations with even the most insignificant of his followers. He was born to the manner of a gentle stateliness which is the first attribute of all men whom God intends for princes. He possessed great courage, and in military matters showed a readiness to make use of expedients and tactics till then unknown in Arab warfare. Conspicuous for his rugged eloquence in a land in which men still view eloquence as a manly virtue, he was often able to win a stubborn foe to the faith by some simple thrusting argument in which mother wit was blended with rare fancy.

Up to the time of the Flight he had preached only a faith, but thenceforward piled upon this a cult, a series of observances, and many laws which had no necessary bearing upon religion at all. His creed, as evolved at Mecca, had a majestic simplicity, lost to Europeans in their unconscious confusion between creed and laws. It may be summed up in a dozen lines. Mahommedanism, stripped of its accessories, is pure theism, enjoining jus-

tice, brotherhood among the faithful, abstinence from breaches of the universal moral law, the sexual law partially accepted, and persistent and regular public prayers. That is the substance of Islam, the only creed essential to a Mussulman, salvation, the only law binding upon the soul. An active Moslem *ought* also to perform his social duties, to obey the Caliph, to defend the faith by arms, to bind himself under some few ceremonial laws. The notion of an inevitable fate, of a power before which human effort is powerless, and which is now universal in the Mahommedan world, was no idea of the Prophet. He doubtless caused it by the excessive rigour with which he pressed upon his followers the notion of the immediate and incessant application of the Divine power to earthly affairs—a notion which makes the strong Puritan doubly energetic, but inclines the weaker Asiatic to indolent acquiescence—but it was no theory of the Koran.

As a religion for the soul, Mahommedanism is too negative, fails to meet the inherent sense of sin, and entirely omits the great correlative of benevolence, love to

God as a motive for action. By Asiatics, however, who consider that love and obedience are not so much cause and effect as absolutely synonymous, this deficiency is rarely felt; and in all other respects Islam, as a creed, is an enormous advance, not only on all idolatries, but on all systems of human origin. It utterly roots out idolatry, and restores the one ever-living God to His true place, if not in the hearts, at least in the imagination and reverence of mankind. It establishes the principle, not indeed of benevolence towards all God's creatures, but of benevolence towards all who have deserved it by expressing their faith in the one true Deity. It prohibits all the universally recognised crimes, save one, makes temperance a religious obligation, and finally releases its followers from the burden of a cult, of a law which made ceremonial observance a source or condition of salvation. Prayer does not become a ceremony because it is fixed for certain times, and the Koran never intended that it should degenerate into a form. Other ceremony in Islam there was none, circumcision being no-

where ordained and only retained by the Moslem in imitation of their pagan ancestors. It is doubtful whether Mahommed was circumcised himself.

There remains one other point which in Europe is considered justly enough a dogma of Islam—the duty of extending the faith by force. This, however, formed no part of the doctrine as preached in Mecca ; it was developed full-grown at the time of the first war with Mecca, when he promised paradise to him that fell in arms. It is very doubtful whether Mahommed had ever thought out his terrible sentence—the sword is the key of heaven and hell, the dogma which, chiming in as it does with the fierce courage of the bravest Asiatic races, and adding to " the triumph and the vanity, the rapture of the strife," the grandeur of moral well-doing, has proved the political safeguard of the Mussulman tribes, urging them onwards perpetually to broader dominion and enabling them, when defeated, to die fighting in the assured hope of a sensual immortality. Of all Mahommed's revelations this was the one most eagerly believed. It is to

this day the last which a sceptical Mahommedan doubts, and it exercises a power over inferior races almost as extraordinary as the sway Christian truth can sometimes obtain. Imagine the Puritan soldiers convinced not only that their cause was favoured of God, but that Cromwell was His vicegerent, and that the Day of Judgment could never arrive for the soldier slain in battle, and we gain some idea of the spirit in which the followers of Mahommed then and to this day advance to the conflict with infidels.

Politically, it is easy to understand the position of Mahommed. Believing himself to be the Messenger of the Almighty, he extended the strength of this conviction to his legislative acts, and even here we are almost without the means of knowing what were the principles he intended to lay down. The living law of Mahommedanism is not to be found in the Koran, but in the commentators—a set of the most vicious scoundrels who ever disgraced humanity, whose first object was to relax the plain meaning of the edicts as far as practicable. The original code is on most

points just enough. The law as regards property differs nothing in essentials from that which prevails in Europe. Property is sacred, and is pretty fairly divided among relatives. Life is held in reverence and theft is prohibited, even with cruelty. Truth is strongly inculcated, and adherence to treaties declared an obligation binding on the conscience. Adultery is punished with death, though that provision is hampered by a curious law of evidence; and reverence for parents is sedulously inculcated. Mahommed claimed to introduce a new dispensation, and in substituting the brotherhood in Islam for the old tribal ties he struck at the root of the political system of Arabia, where society was constituted of kindred groups united by blood bond and common blood feud. That system gave him protection during the early days of his preaching at Mecca, but it is a remarkable tribute to the soundness of his political insight that he realised that orderly government of the Arabs could be rendered possible only by legislation visiting the remembrance of pre-Islamic quarrels with condign punishment,

urging the acceptance of blood-money and limiting the vengeance to be demanded to the equivalent of the offence committed.

Nothing has been said of Mahommed's private life, of his eleven wives and two slave-girls, of the strangely relaxed law of the sexes which he established, or if he did not establish it, which he recognised, and of his own departures even from that loose code. The omission is intended, for too much has always been made of that point in Mahommed's career. In early life, temperate to a marvel for Arabia, he was undoubtedly in his later years a man loving women. Yet he was not licentious, for though all things, good and bad, are recorded of Mahommed, we hear of no seduction, no adultery, no interference with the families of his followers. He was simply a man loving women, and heaping up wives as if he had been exempted from the law he himself laid down. He probably thought he was, as his followers undoubtedly did, and personally he was no worse than thousands whom modern Europe practically condones. He was no better, but it is mere folly to say that his

legislation was exceptionally licentious. What he did as regards his followers was simply this: he left the question exactly as he found it—did not rise one hair-breadth above the general level of Oriental opinion. That opinion is doubtless an evil one. The true law of chastity, the adherence of one man to one woman as long as they both live, is written in a revelation older than any book—in the great law which makes the numbers of the sexes equal. That law, however, has never reached the Oriental mind. It is the fixed opinion of Asiatics that the relation of the sexes is a purely physical one, and not subject to any inherent law at all; modifiable, it is true, by external legislation, but not in itself a subject of necessary and inevitable moral restraint. Mahommed made no attempt to alter that opinion. He fixed a limit to the number of wives, but it was not intended as a moral protection, for he formally assigned all female slaves to the mercy of their masters. He left a monstrous evil without a remedy, and for so doing, he is doubtless to be condemned. But that he introduced

a new evil is untrue; and badly as the system he sanctioned works, it is rather among the rich and the powerful than among the mass of his followers that it produces utter corruption.

CHRONOLOGY

THE sources of our knowledge of the life of Mahommed are various and of varying authenticity. There is first the Koran, written by men like Zeid, on palm leaves, on skin, on blade-bones, and engraved deep in the hearts of men. Apart from internal evidence which tells strongly in favour of it, there are many reasons for believing it to represent the word of the Prophet. It was never disputed after his death, and in the second generation, which sought to preserve all that tradition had kept for them of the days and deeds of Mahommed, the narratives of eye-witnesses of important events, or even of men who had taken part in them, were eagerly and reverently recorded. There can be no doubt that the main sequence of events from the commencement of the mission has been accurately preserved, and even

greater certainty attaches to the record of the detailed events after the Flight. Discrepancies there are in plenty, but they seem to arise mainly from the fact that the original dates of these events were translated into the Moslem calendar by a procedure which is unknown to us, and is not at all likely to have been scientific. The Era of the Hegira precedes the day of the Flight by sixty-eight days, and begins from the first day of the month Muharram, which coincides with Friday, July 16th, A.D. 622. From the fact, for which there is strong evidence, that he reached the outskirts of Medina on the Jewish Day of Atonement, is deduced the conclusion that September 20th, A.D. 622, was the date of this notable event in his career.

A.D.	
? 570.	Mahommed born.
? 595.	Marriage with Khadija.
? 610.	Beginning of mission.
? 613.	First public proclamation.
? 618.	Deaths of Abu Talib and Khadija.
	Mahommed and his followers besieged in Mecca.
620.	Flight to Tayif.

A.D.	
622.	July 16th. Beginning of the Moslem Era, the Hegira.
	September 20th. Arrival at Medina.
624.	Battle of Badr.
625.	Battle of Ohod.
627.	Medina besieged by the Koreish.
628.	Treaty with Mecca.
629.	Pilgrimage to Mecca.
630.	Capture of Mecca. Attack on Tayif.
	Expedition to Syrian border. Final proclamation of Prophet.
632.	Death of Mahommed on June 8th.

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